

INSPECTION REPORT

ST PATRICK'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Birstall, Batley

LEA area: Kirklees

Unique reference number: 107752

Headteacher: Sister S T Dobbins

Reporting inspector: Mr Graham Sims
28899

Dates of inspection: 31st March – 1st April 2003

Inspection number: 246714

Short inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	3 – 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Rev A Wilson
Date of previous inspection:	2 nd March 1998

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is situated in the small town of Birstall on the edge of Kirklees and close to Leeds. It is a voluntary aided Catholic primary school, with 238 boys and girls on roll between the ages of 4 and 11. The school also has a Nursery which is attended in the morning by 26 children. It is an average-sized school, which is oversubscribed. The school serves the Roman Catholic communities of Howden Clough, Birkenshaw, Gomersal, Birstall, Drighlington, and parts of Cleckheaton. Although very few pupils are eligible for free school meals, pupils come from a range of social and economic backgrounds. Very few pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and none come from homes where English is not the main spoken language. Very few pupils join or leave the school other than at the usual times of joining or leaving. Less than five per cent of the pupils have been identified as having special educational needs, which is well below average. Six pupils receive help from outside specialists for moderate learning or physical difficulties. Four pupils have statements of special educational need. Children are admitted into the Reception in September or January, according to when they have their fifth birthday. Two-thirds of these children will have attended the school's own Nursery. The attainment of children when they start school is generally average. The school's staffing situation is very stable and, apart from the transformation of one room into a computer suite, and the creation of a new library, there have been no major changes since the last inspection. The inspection of collective worship and religious education is carried out separately by the diocese.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Patrick's Catholic Primary School is a very good school with some outstanding features. The school receives an average income and provides very good value for money. The daily life of the school is influenced in no small measure by the faith which the staff profess and live out in an undemonstrative, but practical, caring and loving way. This results in an excellent ethos, the key features of which are committed, hard-working staff and happy, well-behaved pupils. Throughout the school, the combination of very good teaching and the pupils' excellent attitudes and behaviour enables pupils to make very good progress and to achieve very high standards in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave the school. Many factors contribute to the school's success, but the most influential has been the outstanding leadership, dedication and personal example provided by the headteacher who is soon to retire, having served the school for 42 years, 30 of them as headteacher. The school provides a living monument to her endeavours.

What the school does well

- The headteacher has provided the school with outstanding leadership, which has motivated the staff, given example to the pupils, and enabled the school to improve and achieve the highest standards.
- The ethos of the school is excellent. The staff and pupils successfully live out the school's aims and values, creating a joyful, friendly and caring school, in which each individual is valued and personal achievements are celebrated.
- Committed and hard-working teachers provide very good teaching, which enables the pupils to make very good progress from an average starting point and to achieve very high standards by the time they leave the school.

What could be improved

- The resources available for pupils and staff to make greater use of information and communication technology.
- The school's accommodation, which is unsatisfactory for children in the Nursery, and in which the ergonomics of most classrooms limit opportunities for teachers to use a wider variety of teaching methods.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan, which will be sent to all parents and carers of pupils in the school.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The improvement since the last inspection in March 1998 has been very good. The school has not only maintained all of the positive features noted at that time, but has responded well to the key issues which were identified. The school has extended its system of monitoring and evaluating its own work, and this has had a significant impact on improving the quality of teaching and raising standards. Significant progress has been made in improving the teaching of information and communication technology and the standards achieved by pupils throughout the school, although further progress is hindered by lack of resources. More training has been provided for governors, who fulfil their roles effectively. The school has a good number of teaching assistants, who fulfil their roles well and make a positive contribution to pupils' progress. The headteacher has provided significant impetus, and the staff have shown great commitment, to the school's plans for improvement, resulting in a school which is continually moving forward and where academic standards are continuing to improve.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			similar schools
	all schools			
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	A	B	A*	A
Mathematics	A	A	A	A
Science	B	A	A*	A

Key	
Very high	A*
Well above average	A
Above average	B
Average	C
Below average	D
Well below average	E
Very low	E*

National test results: In 2002, the school's national test results at the end of Year 6 were well above the national average in mathematics. The overall results, and those in English and science, were amongst the top five per cent of schools in the country. When compared to schools with pupils from similar backgrounds and to schools with pupils of similar prior attainment, the results were also well above average. Since the last inspection, standards in mathematics and science have risen at a similar rate to the national trend. In English, they have risen faster than in most schools. Standards in all three subjects are significantly higher now than at the time of the last inspection. In contrast to most schools, boys achieved better results than girls in 2002. The school sets itself challenging targets and has, generally, been successful in meeting them. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 2 in reading and writing were well above the national average, and in mathematics they were amongst the top five per cent of schools in the country. Results in all three aspects were well above the average for similar schools, and have improved since the last inspection, most markedly in mathematics.

Inspection findings: The attainment of children when they start school is generally fairly typical for three- and four-year-olds. Pupils of all abilities make very good progress from the Nursery through to Year 6. By the end of the Reception year, standards are above average. By the end of Year 2, they are well above average. By the end of Year 6, they are very high indeed. This is because the school is particularly successful in ensuring that virtually all pupils achieve the expected standards in each year and that increasingly large proportions of pupils achieve above the level expected for their age. By the end of Year 6, for example, almost two-thirds of the pupils are achieving above the expected level in English and over three-quarters in science. There is plenty of challenge and stimulus for the most able pupils, and very good help is provided for those with special educational needs. Standards achieved by younger pupils in reading are exceptionally good. Standards in writing are high throughout the school because pupils have plenty of opportunity to practise their writing skills through the work undertaken in all subjects of the curriculum. Standards in information and communication technology are improving, and most pupils reach the standards expected for their age, although further progress is hampered

because pupils have limited access to computers. Overall, pupils are achieving very well and leave the school very well equipped for the next stage of their education.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. Pupils have extremely positive attitudes to their work, which improve noticeably as they move through the school. They enjoy their lessons, participate enthusiastically and work hard. They are very proud of their school and show loyalty to it, their teachers and each other.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Excellent. Although many of the younger pupils have to make adjustments to their behaviour, they quickly learn what is expected of them. In many lessons, particularly in the classes for older pupils, their behaviour is exemplary, as it is when moving around the school and in assemblies. The school is a very orderly, well-disciplined, but also very friendly community.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. The quality of pupils' relationships with the staff and amongst their peers is excellent. Pupils respond in a mature and sensible manner to the responsibilities they are given, although there is room for providing pupils with more opportunities to take on responsibility, both within the school and for their own learning. Older pupils are very responsible in their dealings with younger pupils.
Attendance	Very good. Pupils are keen to come to school. The level of attendance is well above the national average, although a few pupils do not always arrive punctually at the start of the day.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 and 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good	Very good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

Throughout the school, the combination of very good teaching, the very positive attitudes of the pupils, and well-disciplined classes, results in very good learning and standards, which become increasingly high as pupils move through the school. Lessons are planned very carefully and teachers make good and efficient use of the teaching time available during the day. The teachers cater well for pupils of all abilities, ensuring that challenging work is provided for the most able pupils and sufficient support for pupils with special educational needs and other pupils who need it. English and mathematics are taught very well. The teachers have very high expectations, motivate pupils to learn and provide plenty of opportunities for them to consolidate their learning. A particularly good feature is the way that teachers give pupils the opportunity to consolidate their literacy skills throughout the day. Pupils are given demanding texts to read and much written work is undertaken in subjects such as geography, history and religious education. This is a significant factor in helping pupils to achieve high standards in writing. Pupils' work is marked regularly and teachers write some encouraging and helpful comments. However, some pupils could be helped to improve their work even more if the teachers were more critical in pointing out where pupils make mistakes or how they could improve their work, and if they ensured that pupils went back over completed pieces of work to learn from their mistakes. The teachers cope well with the large class sizes and with classrooms which are not well appointed and, in Years 3 to 6, are overcrowded. The ergonomics of many classrooms, however, make it difficult for teachers to arrange for pupils to undertake collaborative work in larger groups, or for them to make good use of overhead projectors or new technology. This is a particular frustration for some, as the teachers' confidence in the use of information and communication technology has improved significantly since the last inspection. However, lack of resources, both within the computer suite and within the classroom, limits pupils' access to computers and their use of them as tools for learning in other subjects. Throughout the

school, the excellent relationships between staff and pupils, and the increasing maturity and responsiveness of the pupils as they move through the school, contribute significantly to pupils' learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The school provides a rich, well-balanced curriculum, which fully meets statutory requirements. Subjects are skilfully integrated, so that work in one often complements and promotes learning in another. The school provides a good range of visits to places of interest, but the range of extra-curricular activities is not as extensive as it is in some schools.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. The school has very few pupils with special educational needs, but the procedures for identifying pupils' needs and for monitoring their progress are very good. Provision for these pupils is well organised, and the very good support provided by teachers and teaching assistants enables these pupils to make very good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Excellent. The attention given to most aspects of pupils' personal development is outstanding. The noticeable improvements in pupils' attitudes, behaviour and sense of responsibility as they move through the school is largely due to the thoughtful and caring way in which staff promote Christian values and attitudes. The provision for pupils' personal development could be even better with more opportunities for pupils to work together and to take greater responsibility for their own learning.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. This is a very caring school in which staff know pupils and their circumstances very well. They treat pupils with care and consideration and pay very good attention to their welfare, health and safety. The school keeps a very careful track of pupils' progress and uses this information well to challenge pupils to achieve even better.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The headteacher's leadership is outstanding. She keeps fully up to date with new initiatives, is keen to move the school forward, motivates the staff and provides a shining example of care and concern for the pupils. The excellent ethos within the school owes much to her direction, enthusiasm and example. She is supported very well by a committed, hard-working staff, who undertake their leadership responsibilities very well.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors fulfil their statutory obligations well. They are very supportive of the school, and understand its strengths and the challenges which lie ahead with the appointment of a new headteacher from September. They maintain a careful overview of the finances and provide thoughtful input into strategic planning.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Excellent. The school is rigorous in evaluating its own performance and identifying appropriate areas for development. Subject co-ordinators use their opportunities to monitor teaching and learning well. The willingness of the staff and their commitment to bringing further improvement are excellent.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school's finances are managed very efficiently and prudently, and high priority is given to ensuring that there is a sufficient number of teaching assistants to provide support for teachers in every class. In seeking to provide best value, the school compares its performance with others and undertakes appropriate consultation before making major spending decisions. Greater

	attention needs to be given to the layout and facilities available within classrooms.
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PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The friendly, supportive atmosphere in school. • The school's values and attitudes which permeate every aspect of the school's work. • Children really enjoy coming to school. • Standards of behaviour are very good. • The quality of the teaching is very good. • Their children are expected to work hard and are making good progress • The teachers are very supportive and helpful. • They feel welcome in school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of activities provided outside lessons. • A small number of parents feel that the school could give earlier notification of events and provide more time for children to complete their homework.
<p>[The views of parents are based on those expressed by the 7 parents who attended the parents' meeting and the 120 parents (48%) who returned the parents' questionnaire, some of whom also added their own written comments]</p>	

Overall, parents are very pleased indeed with the education their children receive at St Patrick's. They have a very high regard for the headteacher. One parent described the atmosphere within the school as 'sheer magic'. Whilst perhaps not the most appropriate adjective for a Catholic school, it sums up in vivid and understandable jargon what many parents feel about the school. The inspection team fully endorses all of the positive views expressed by parents. It is, indeed, a very good school with a very special atmosphere.

Very few concerns were raised by parents. Whilst the school does offer pupils a variety of activities after school, the range is not as extensive as in many schools. The communications to parents viewed by the inspection team generally provide adequate notification for most parents, other than those whose diaries are booked up well in advance. Most parents, and the inspection team, feel the school strikes an appropriate balance in the setting of homework. The school may wish, however, to consider how long it allows pupils to complete their homework.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The headteacher has provided the school with outstanding leadership, which has motivated the staff, given example to the pupils, and enabled the school to improve and achieve the highest standards.

1. The success of St Patrick's Catholic Primary School is due, in no small measure, to the outstanding leadership of the headteacher, who will be retiring at the end of the current academic year. Her leadership is all the more remarkable in that, after serving the school for over 40 years and 30 of them as headteacher, she is very aware of new initiatives; she encourages change in a continual quest for improvement, and she continues to provide an impetus which motivates staff and pupils to give of their very best. Her commitment and dedication to the service of others are exemplary and have won the respect, admiration and loyalty of governors, parents, staff and pupils. More importantly, they have helped to engender the excellent ethos which permeates the school and which results in such high standards from humble beginnings. The pupils see the school's watchwords of 'care, courtesy and concern' acted out in practice by the headteacher and all of the staff.
2. In her role as the school's leader, the headteacher sees the following tasks as some of the most important: ensuring good communication between all involved with the school, introducing change smoothly, planning and monitoring the school's development, recognising the potential of all staff, delegating well, and maintaining staff morale and excellent relationships. She is highly successful in all of these tasks, but the establishment and maintenance of good rapport and the motivation of staff have a profound impact. During the inspection, many staff spoke of the good working relationships which exist amongst the staff. They also alluded to the way the headteacher 'keeps up with what is going on', 'makes us work hard', and 'keeps us on our toes', but at the same time they also spoke of the way the headteacher values their efforts. As a result, subject co-ordinators carry out their responsibilities well and with enthusiasm. Staff are not all of the same mould, but are a mixture of very varied personalities. However, the headteacher has successfully moulded them into a first-class team, which works together well, provides the pupils with good variety and is united in its common purpose of providing the best education it can.
3. The headteacher also manages the school very well. There are effective and efficient systems and procedures to ensure the smooth running of the school on a day-to-day basis. The school has well-thought-out policies, which staff understand and follow consistently. There are very good systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's performance, identifying areas for development and ensuring that improvements take place. The school's budget is managed and monitored carefully, and spending is matched well to the educational priorities identified within the school's development plan. New initiatives are implemented thoughtfully and with due consideration to the benefits they will bring to the pupils. As a result, staff know what is expected of them and all play an important part in ensuring the school's success.
4. The headteacher does much to encourage positive relationships with parents. As well as each class providing a newsletter each term, a meeting is held at the start of each school year to explain to parents what work will be covered during the year. Further meetings are held each term to discuss the progress their children are making. The school maintains an open-door policy, so that parents have every opportunity to discuss any matters of concern with their children's teacher or with the headteacher.

Parents reciprocate by providing wide-ranging support for the school, from a strong parent-teacher association, which raises funds for the school, to the support provided by volunteers for various activities within school. As a result, there is a very strong community spirit, which is enhanced by the links which the school and many parents have with the local church.

5. The headteacher has been very successful in ensuring that the school's mission statement is translated into practice. Clauses such as 'our children will be encouraged to live the Gospel values through all aspects of the curriculum', and 'we seek to foster respect for the unique value and giftedness of each member of the school community' have a reality in the way staff treat the pupils and in the way the curriculum is organised. The school's commitment to offering equality of opportunity to pupils regardless of race, gender or particular needs is unquestioned, and the headteacher, governor for special educational needs and members of the senior management team monitor carefully the implementation of the school's policies for racial equality, disability, inclusion and special educational needs. The school's test results are analysed carefully to ensure that all groups of pupils are catered for. The curriculum is rich and varied. Whilst acknowledging the importance of developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, much less time is devoted overtly to the teaching of English and mathematics than in many schools. Instead, the curriculum is managed in such a way that all subjects can be taught in reasonable depth whilst, at the same time, contributing to the development of pupils' basic skills. Visits to places of interest, many related to pupils' work in history, bring teaching alive and provide a source of motivation for the pupils.
6. The headteacher ensures that staff keep a very careful track of pupils' progress, particularly in English and mathematics. Pupils' writing is assessed regularly. An initial assessment is made at the start of each school year, and then further assessments are made during the year. The results of these are used to show pupils what they have achieved and to raise their awareness of what they need to do to improve. Regular assessment tests are used in mathematics to identify weaknesses and to set individual targets for pupils. Progress in foundation subjects¹ is assessed through end-of-unit assessment sheets. All teachers maintain a class data file, which passes from one class to the next as pupils move through the school, providing teachers with a clear indication of the progress their pupils are making. Overall, the school's assessment procedures are very good and enable teachers to match activities to pupils' needs.
7. There is no hint of complacency because the school is doing well, as all aspects of the school are monitored regularly, carefully and critically. The headteacher, curriculum co-ordinator and subject co-ordinators scrutinise the planning of the curriculum to ensure that guidelines are followed and that all aspects of the curriculum are taught appropriately. Note is taken of the displays around the school, samples of pupils' work are scrutinised and pupils are interviewed. The headteacher keeps an eagle eye on the analyses of the statutory and non-statutory national tests, which are taken by pupils throughout the school, as well as teachers' own evaluations of their lessons. All staff have their performance reviewed regularly and are set targets for improvement. The systems for performance review provide yet another way of uniting staff in the common purposes of moving the school forward and keeping standards high. Opportunities are provided for all staff with subject management responsibilities to have time in which they are free from their class teaching commitments to monitor the teaching of their subjects and to evaluate how performance can be improved. Overall, therefore, the

¹ The foundation subjects are: art and design, design and technology, geography, history, information and communication technology, music, and physical education.

school's systems for monitoring, evaluating and improving its own performance are excellent and are having a significant impact of improving overall standards.

8. The headteacher's approach to self-evaluation has resulted in very good improvement over the five years since the school's previous inspection. All of the key issues identified at that time have been tackled well. The good monitoring systems, which existed at that time, have been improved further. Despite a lack of resources, significant progress has been made in improving the teaching of information and communication technology. There has been much greater input into developing the expertise of the school's teaching assistants, who fulfil their roles well and make a positive contribution to pupils' progress. Above all, the school has continued to improve academically. From a position in 1998, in which the school's results were already well above average, the school has continued to widen the gap between its results and those of other schools, so that its performance at the end of Year 6 is now amongst the top five per cent of schools in the country.

The ethos of the school is excellent. The staff and pupils successfully live out the school's aims and values, creating a joyful, friendly and caring school in which each individual is valued and personal achievements are celebrated.

9. The visitor to St Patrick's School cannot fail to be struck by the school's positive, friendly and caring ethos. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that parents have such a high regard for the school, that pupils come to St Patrick's from a wide area and that the school is oversubscribed. Parents particularly value the fact that their children enjoy school, that they are made to work hard and that the school is helping them to become mature and responsible. They like the friendly atmosphere and the school's religious ethos. The findings of this short inspection certainly endorse these views.
10. The staff are fully committed to the well-being of the pupils and pay very good attention to their welfare, health and safety. They know the pupils and their circumstances very well and treat them with care and consideration. As a result, the pupils feel happy and secure within the school environment, knowing that any problems will be dealt with quickly and fairly. Parents, too, find it easy to approach the school if any problems occur. Careful attention is given to any pupils with particular needs, and the school has good links with outside agencies who provide additional help when required.

11. Although the school's provision for pupils' spiritual development, religious education and collective worship is the subject of a separate inspection by the diocese, it is so central to the school's perceived mission and imbues every aspect of the life of the school, that it has to be commented on as one of the school's most significant strengths which has a profound impact on the pupils' development. At the start and end of the day and before meals, prayers are said in a way which helps pupils to reflect on important issues, and to develop a sense of gratitude and an awareness of deeper realities. At the start of the week in Year 6, for example, the teacher focused pupils' attention on issues of national and international concern and also invited pupils to mention situations for which they would value prayer. Half of the class raised their hands to talk briefly about situations which were of concern to them. They did so in an easy, natural manner, evoking an intensely human and caring response from the class teacher. The sensitively managed occasion not only provided a thought-provoking start to the day, but gave an insight into how the school helps its pupils to develop a sense of care and concern for each other. The two assemblies observed, one for each key stage², were also deeply moving occasions involving the participation of most of the pupils in the school. Each class made a contribution to the carefully planned occasions, focusing on the needs of others and ways in which they could be of help to those in need. The most striking aspect on both occasions was the respect with which pupils listened and responded to the contributions of others, creating a deep sense of awe and reverence during this regular weekly gathering.
12. The overall provision for pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is excellent. In addition to the regular opportunities for prayer and acts of collective worship, the school promotes pupils' spiritual development by developing a climate within which all pupils can grow and flourish, respect others and be respected. In lessons, teachers value pupils' questions and contributions, and encourage them to voice their own thoughts, ideas and concerns. In a mathematics lesson in Year 6, for example, the teacher provided significant challenge for the pupils but framed his questions so that all pupils could take part, and he provided encouragement for the more reticent pupils, who were left in no doubt that their efforts in responding to his questions had been valued. In religious education lessons, the teachers not only help pupils to explore their own faith, but give them an understanding of other major religions. The teachers are also good at using informal opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual development. For example, while the teacher in the Reception class was waiting for children to come in from outside, she led those who were ready in singing 'Thank you Lord for this new day' and, when the whole class was present, got the children to reflect for a short time on the importance of being thankful.
13. The provision for pupils' moral and social development is equally strong. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent. Throughout the school, staff promote Christian values and attitudes, and help pupils to develop a good awareness of how they are expected to behave and respond. As the teachers show pupils that their individual contributions in lessons or the effort they have made over a piece of work are valued, so the pupils develop a good sense of self-esteem and inner confidence. Various areas of the curriculum provide opportunities for pupils to discuss and consider issues of topical importance and moral and social relevance, such as discussion of the

² The words 'Key Stage' refer to the different stages of learning in schools. Children start school in the Foundation Stage, which caters for children aged 3 to 5 and generally refers to children who are in the Nursery, Reception or Early Years classes. Key Stage 1 is the first stage of compulsory primary education. It caters for pupils aged 5 to 7 and refers to pupils who are in Years 1 and 2. Key Stage 1 is also frequently synonymous with the term Infants. Key Stage 2 is the second stage of primary education. It caters for pupils aged 7 to 11 and refers to pupils who are in Years 3 to 6. Key Stage 2 is also frequently synonymous with the term Juniors. At the age of 11, pupils start Key Stage 3, which marks the beginning of their secondary education.

development of residential areas within the Yorkshire Dales. Other occasions during the day are used in a thoughtful way to help pupils' social development. A good example is the way the school has organised the arrangements for lunch in order to develop more sociable habits amongst the younger pupils. Alternate year groups have lunch at the same time, with pupils from different year groups sitting at the same table. Older pupils are expected to be role models to the younger pupils and help to ensure the atmosphere is quiet, orderly and civilised. Pupils' behaviour whilst coming in, whilst saying grace and whilst awaiting their turn to be served is exemplary.

14. The school also provides very good opportunities for pupils' cultural development. Pupils study one major religion each term and learn to respect the holy books of other religions. They have visited a mosque and a synagogue. In providing a rich curriculum, the school helps pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding of life, climate and culture in other countries. A brief scrutiny of pupils' books in various year groups shows pupils learn about such diverse countries and cultures as the Inuits, Tunisia, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and, closer to home, the Yorkshire Dales. Music and art also make an important contribution to the pupils' cultural development.
15. Much of the input into pupils' personal development comes through the teachers' regular interaction with pupils throughout the day. Recently, however, the school has been developing its policy for personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) in discussion with governors and through in-service training provided by the diocese. A new programme of work has been adopted, much of which is covered in religious education lessons, some in specific PSHCE lessons, and some through the teaching of history and geography. Work has also been undertaken on implementing a policy to promote racial equality, although the school's ethos is such that there are no racial tensions within the school and there is a very strong emphasis on respecting the views, values and opinions of those from different backgrounds.
16. As a result of the school's input, the pupils have extremely positive attitudes to their work, which improve noticeably as they move through the school. They enjoy their lessons, participate enthusiastically and work hard. They respond very well to their teachers, with whom they have an excellent rapport. Pupils in Year 1 were eager to complete the individual mathematics tasks they had been given. In a very good English lesson in Year 2, the great majority of the pupils were eager to answer the teacher's questions and to show her what they had found out by reading some very challenging newspaper articles. In a good English lesson in Year 3, where the teaching style was very different, pupils were equally enthusiastic and responsive. By the time they reach Year 6, pupils have developed the ability to work hard, on their own and in silence, and to concentrate well, without losing the enthusiasm to participate in lively discussion and debate. They are very proud of their school and show loyalty to it, their teachers and each other.
17. By the time pupils reach Years 5 and 6, their behaviour both in and out of the classroom is excellent. It is also excellent for much of the time in other classes, but many of the younger pupils are still learning how to adjust their behaviour to conform to the very high standards expected by the school. In the Reception, for example, where most of the children had only been in the class for a few weeks by the time of the inspection, some still have a tendency to call out their answers or cut across another child who is speaking and, in Year 1, pupils find it hard to work quietly when given individual work to complete. However, the teachers in these classes are very good at reinforcing the school's expectations, so that there is noticeable improvement as pupils move through the school. The example of older pupils is also particularly important in influencing the younger pupils, and the effect can be seen very clearly in the dining hall. When pupils are gathered together in larger groups, such as for assemblies, their

behaviour is exemplary. Relationships amongst pupils and between pupils and staff are very good indeed. As a result, the school is a very orderly and well-disciplined community, but also one which is marked by enjoyment and friendship and in which pupils know they are valued for who they are.

Committed and hard-working teachers provide very good teaching which enables the pupils to make very good progress from an average starting point and to achieve very high standards by the time they leave the school.

18. The overall quality of the teaching throughout the school is very good. Of the lessons observed during the inspection, four out of five were good or better, and almost two out of five were very good or better. Parents have a very high regard for the teaching. All of the parents responding to the questionnaire agreed with the assertions that the teaching is good and that their children are expected to work hard, and four out of five parents strongly agreed with these statements. The inspection findings endorse parents' positive views. One of the reasons why pupils make such good progress throughout the school is that the teaching in all classes is of a consistently high standard. There are no year groups in which the teaching is weak or in which the teachers fail to provide for the needs of all pupils.
19. The quality of the teaching has improved since the last inspection and there are many reasons for this. Under the headteacher's shrewd leadership, every new national initiative has been used to good effect to enhance the quality of the teaching, and the school's procedures for professional development ensure that areas for development are identified and appropriate training is provided. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have raised teachers' awareness of different ways to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. The school's provision for science and music benefits from the leadership of teachers who are specialists in these subjects. Other subject co-ordinators undertake their responsibilities well, providing good guidance for other teachers and maintaining a careful overview of what is happening within their subject areas. The school has made it a priority to ensure that each teacher receives the support of a teaching assistant for a significant amount of time each day. The assistants are well trained and play a significant role in the life of the school. Curricular planning is very good and helps teachers to be fully aware of what needs to be taught during the year. Time is used efficiently during the day. Assessment procedures are very good and help teachers to adjust the emphasis of their teaching to meet pupils' needs. The teachers evaluate the effectiveness of their lessons each week which helps them to develop an understanding of how well their pupils are progressing and which methods prove to be most successful. The school has also benefited from a very stable staff, who fully support the school's aims and are dedicated and hard-working. They undertake their teaching duties and subject responsibilities with great commitment, and the pupils benefit greatly from this thorough and professional approach.
20. The teachers cater well for pupils of all abilities and, because of the additional support provided by teaching assistants and the teachers' carefully differentiated planning, few pupils required any further attention for special educational needs. However, the individual attention and small group sessions provided to help such pupils are very good and enable them to make very good progress in relation to their prior attainment. There is plenty of challenge throughout the school for the more able pupils, who work diligently and enthusiastically. A number of parents at the pre-inspection meeting commented on how well the school catered for their children as individuals. Two parents gave examples of having two children at opposite ends of the learning

spectrum and they had been delighted with the progress made by both children because the teachers perceived their needs and dealt with them appropriately.

21. English and mathematics are taught very well. The development of writing has been a major priority on the school's development plan for the last few years, and the school's latest test results show that it has been very successful in its aim to improve the quality of pupils' writing. Although the school works within the time allocations recommended by the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, it does not devote as much time to the specific teaching of these two subjects as many schools, but seeks to integrate the teaching of literacy skills into every subject, and the teaching of numeracy skills, where appropriate, into subjects like science and geography. This approach is particularly successful. Because more time is provided for subjects like geography, history and religious education than in many schools, the pupils have more time to write. This not only enables them to develop their understanding of the subjects concerned but has a significant impact on the development of their writing skills. The only drawback is that it provides teachers with an insuperably large amount of marking. Reading skills are also developed well, and pupils are frequently given very challenging texts which help them to make very good progress. Pupils in Year 2, for example, were reading full newspaper extracts in an English lesson, which was also related to their studies of Scott of the Antarctic. Their ability to deal with such complex texts was impressive.
22. Despite the small size and poor ergonomics of many of the classrooms, which restrict the range of teaching methods which can be used, the teachers succeed in providing lessons which pupils find interesting and using methods which motivate them. In Year 6, for example, pupils were developing an understanding of Shakespeare's Twelfth Night through a drama lesson in which they participated enthusiastically. In Year 5, the teacher helped pupils to develop their understanding of the movement of the earth around the sun by plotting where the shadow of a silhouette taped to a window fell at various times during the day. In Year 4, pupils enjoyed consolidating their understanding of fractions through the use of a computer program produced by a well-known maker of chocolate. Interesting work in history and geography, based on studies of the local area, had clearly captured the interest of pupils in Years 1 and 3, whilst pupils in Year 2 were very keen to talk about all they had discovered about Scott of the Antarctic. In all classes, the teachers are good at asking probing questions and engaging pupils in discussion. The use of information and communication technology is being integrated more successfully into lessons than before, although the lack of resources prevents widespread use of computers.

23. The school's national test results and the observations of the inspection team show that the high quality of the teaching, combined with the positive attitudes and hard work of the pupils, results in very good progress and standards which compare more and more favourably with other schools as pupils move through the school. Although there is, as in most schools, a fair spread of attainment when children start in both the Nursery and the Reception, the overall level of attainment when children start school is very average. Because of the very good teaching and wide range of activities provided in the Nursery and the Reception, standards are already above average by the time they start Year 1. By the end of Key Stage 1, the school's overall results in the national tests are well above the average for all schools and, by the end of Key Stage 2, they are very high. In 2002, the overall results at the end of Key Stage 2, and those in English and science were amongst the top five per cent of schools in the country. When compared to schools with pupils from similar backgrounds³ and to schools with pupils of similar prior attainment, the school's performance is also well above average.
24. The school's results shortly after its previous inspection were well above the national average at the end of both key stages but, because standards have continued to rise at a faster rate than in most schools, the gap between St Patrick's School and the national average has widened. The main reason for this is that the school is singularly successful in helping almost every pupil, including those with special educational needs, to reach the expected level for their age, and in providing sufficient challenge for a large proportion of pupils to exceed these expectations. In Key Stage 1, for example, over 95 per cent of the pupils achieved the expected Level 2⁴ in reading, writing and mathematics, with nearly all of them achieving this level very securely. In reading, 40 per cent of the pupils achieved the higher Level 3, whilst in mathematics 63 per cent achieved this level. Whilst the percentage was only 13 per cent in writing, almost half of the pupils were close to achieving Level 3. Indications are that the percentage of pupils achieving Level 3 in reading and writing is likely to improve again this year. The statistics are even more impressive at Key Stage 2. In 2002, almost every pupil achieved the expected Level 4 in English and mathematics, and all achieved this level in science. However, four out of five pupils exceeded the national expectations by achieving Level 5 in science, almost two thirds in English and over half in mathematics.
25. Scrutiny of a wide range of pupils' work during the inspection shows that teachers provide very good coverage of the curriculum in all subjects and that pupils work diligently. The quantity and quality of pupils' written work is impressive and very good progress is evident over the course of the year. In Year 1, for example, an average pupil progressed from writing single words at the start of the year to producing good independent story writing after six months. All aspects of school life are used well to help pupils to develop basic skills. In Year 2, for example, pupils' written accounts of a special praise assembly not only indicate that such occasions are having a positive impact on the pupils in helping them to develop their understanding of Christian values and attitudes, but also that pupils are learning how to use the skills taught in English lessons in a wide variety of contexts. Throughout the school, the pupils show a very good ability to recall what has been taught or discovered in lessons. Many pupils in

³ The school's results are compared both to the national average (ie the average of the results of all schools in England, where pupils took National Curriculum assessment tests at the end of Year 6) and to the average for similar schools (ie the average of the results for all schools whose pupils come from similar socio-economic backgrounds, determined by the eligibility of pupils within the school to receive free school meals).

⁴ The standard of pupils' work is assessed against National Curriculum Levels. The national expectation for each subject is that pupils should be working comfortably at Level 2 by the end of Year 2, and at Level 4 by the end of Year 6.

Year 3, for example, produce lengthy, detailed and well-written accounts in their geography, history and religious education books, drawing on what they have learnt through class discussions. Pupils in Year 4 build well on these skills. They produce detailed and accurate accounts, for example of their work in science, and the writing of the more able pupils is very mature for their age. The school also expects pupils to present their work well. In Year 5, for example, pupils' accounts of investigative work in science are not only detailed, but neatly presented, with a good variety of diagrams and illustration. By the time pupils reach Year 6, they are already achieving very well, but the very high expectations of the teacher, the excellent rapport which exists within the class, combined with the pupils' desire to do well, ensure that all pupils are very well equipped to move on to the next stage of their education.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The resources available for pupils and staff to make more use of information and communication technology.

26. The school's provision for information and communication technology was identified as an area of weakness in the previous inspection. Since then, the school has made significant progress in improving the teachers' understanding of the subject, the quality of the curriculum and the standards achieved by the pupils. All staff have undertaken an extended period of in-service training in order to improve their own expertise and understanding of how and when to use new technology as a tool for learning in other subjects. A new scheme of work has been introduced which covers all aspects of the National Curriculum and seeks to develop pupils' information technology skills in a systematic manner. The school now has a wider range of software than before and has installed a small computer suite.
27. As a result of the improvements, standards of attainment in information and communication technology have risen since the last inspection, and most pupils are working at the expected level for their age. However, standards are not as high as those in English, mathematics and science. There are a few good examples of the use of new technology around the school but, generally, the pupils do not have widespread experience of using new technology in all subjects or as a tool for learning. The main reason for this is because the school still has a limited range of resources. There is only one computer available in each classroom, and only ten in the computer room. The ratio of pupils to computers is still below the government's target for 2002 and well below the target for 2004. One of the reasons for the lack of resources is because the school has received significantly less money from nationally funded initiatives to improve information and communication technology resources than many schools. The low level of funding is also reflected in the fact that the school has no projection facilities or interactive whiteboards for teachers to demonstrate new teaching points in such a way that all pupils can see clearly what is happening.
28. The school's decision to convert part of a spare classroom into a computer suite has increased the opportunities for pupils to use computers, but not yet to a level where pupils have frequent access. Most classes have two timetabled sessions in the suite each week. Generally, one of these is used for teaching information technology skills and the other for using computers to carry out work related to another subject. However, the layout of the room, the fact that parts of the room are used for other purposes, such as the teaching of small groups of pupils at certain times of the day and for the storage of resources, a piano and other equipment, and the limited number of computers make it very difficult to teach a whole class at the same time in the

computer suite. In practice, therefore, only groups of pupils, ranging from half a dozen to half of the class, use the computer room at any one time. As a result, even with two timetabled sessions a week, not all pupils have access to the computer suite each week. In theory, pupils can continue in the classroom work which they have started in the computer suite. In practice, the availability of only one computer makes it very difficult for the whole class to complete extended pieces of work.

The school's accommodation, which is unsatisfactory for children in the Nursery, and in which the ergonomics of most classrooms limit opportunities for teachers to use a wider variety of teaching methods.

29. The accommodation for the school's Nursery children is unsatisfactory. The Nursery is situated in an old prefabricated building separately from the main school building. The headteacher and governing body are well aware of the poor quality of the building, and have recently submitted a bid for the replacement of the Nursery unit. Whilst the staff make the best use they can of the building and endeavour not to let its shortcomings affect the education of the children, the inadequate facilities present obstacles to the smooth running of the Nursery and consume the staff's time which could be spent to better effect. The room itself is small, making each of the working areas very cramped for children and staff. The fabric of the building is in very poor condition. On the second day of the inspection, it was evident that the building is not entirely waterproof. Damp patches on the walls make it difficult to display children's work and to store resources. The external facilities are also limited in size, restricted by lack of storage and rendered inoperative in inclement weather. There is no covered area for children to experience outdoor activities when it rains. Governors' attention has been drawn to the inadequacy and possible hazards of some of the large play apparatus.
30. Some alterations and improvements have been made to the main school building over the years, the most recent of which was conversion from solid fuel to oil-fired heating immediately prior to the inspection. Although the school has reorganised two areas of the school since the last inspection to establish a new library and set up a computer room, insufficient funds have been available for many years to undertake any other work on the school's accommodation. Classrooms for the Reception and Year 1 adjoin the infant toilets, and teachers and pupils have to put up with the pungent aroma that invades the classroom every time the door to this area is opened. Within the classrooms, it is only the excellent behaviour of the pupils in some classes that prevents the scraping of metal chair legs on hard floors from providing a constant distraction in lessons. There are few areas which have been carpeted to deaden the noise and provide an easier working environment.
31. In many classes, the existing blackboards have poor writing surfaces and are far too small to allow them to be used efficiently during lessons. The dust from the boards also provides unnecessary additional work for cleaners and can have an adverse effect on the reliability of machinery such as computers. Facilities for the use of overhead projectors are inadequate in all classrooms. In a literacy lesson in Year 5, for example, there was no conveniently placed electrical socket for the teacher to connect the projector in order to project her prepared text onto the wall. No screen or projection surface was available and the only available space on the wall, which had been covered with a large sheet of paper, was far too small for its intended purpose. As a result, it was impossible for pupils at the back of the class to read the text, which made it difficult for them to follow the introductory part of the lesson.
32. The organisation of storage space could be improved in all classrooms. Most teachers make do with a conglomeration of miscellaneous, ill-fitting cupboards and bookcases

which, in many cases, protrude unnecessarily into the room, reducing the area available for teacher and pupils. In some classes, especially those for the older pupils, there is no space for pupils to gather together at the start or end of the lesson. In others, the area is so cramped that it is, once again, only the very good behaviour of the pupils which allows these sessions to take place without incident or distraction. Some rooms have a disproportionately large area occupied by a sink or other furniture, thus reducing the practically usable space within the room. Little space is available for the classroom computer and, with the present layouts, it is difficult to see how further machines could be accommodated within the classroom.

33. All of the teachers cope well with these various inconveniences and irritants, which do, however, limit the range of teaching methods teachers can use and cause some time in lessons to be wasted. In a history lesson in Year 3, for example, some time was wasted as pupils had to await their turn to access the resources provided for the lesson because there was inadequate space to set out the resources. With greater thought and more appropriately designed furniture and storage facilities, the floor space available in many of the rooms could provide much better circumstances for both teachers and pupils to work in. Whilst pupils are very positive about their school, the areas they would like to see improved are better amenities for football and other sports, more space in the cloakrooms and more computers.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

34. In order to improve the quality of education provided and the standards pupils achieve, the governors, headteacher and staff should work together to:
- i. Improve the range of resources* available for the teaching of information technology skills and the use of new technology as a tool for learning in all subjects of the curriculum (paragraphs 26,27,28).
 - ii. Improve the quality of the school's accommodation, in particular by:
 - seeking ways to improve the quality, safety and appropriateness of the accommodation available for children in the Nursery*;
 - finding ways to produce more ergonomic classrooms, which allow teachers to make better use of new technology and employ a wider range of teaching methods (paragraphs 29,30,31,32,33).

*These issues have already been identified as priorities in the school's development plan.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

25

Number of formal discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

22

[In addition to this figure, there were many informal discussions with staff, other adults and pupils]

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	8	11	5	0	0	0
Percentage	4	32	44	20	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents four percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	13	251
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	–	9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	8

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	6
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	5

Attendance

Authorised absence

%

School data

3.6

Unauthorised absence

%

School data

0.0

National comparative data	5.4
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National comparative data	0.4
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Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	21	19	40

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	19	20	20
	Girls	19	19	19
	Total	38	39	39
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	95 (100)	98 (100)	98 (97)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	20	20	18
	Girls	19	19	19
	Total	39	39	37
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	98 (100)	98 (100)	93 (100)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	17	11	28

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	17	16	17
	Girls	10	10	11
	Total	27	26	28
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	96 (85)	93 (91)	100 (94)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	16	16	17
	Girls	10	10	10
	Total	26	26	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	96 (82)	93 (85)	96 (94)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	193	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	10.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22
Average class size	29.75

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	189.5

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26

Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	12.5

Number of pupils per FTE adult	13
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	1

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	509,149
Total expenditure	514,016
Expenditure per pupil	2,073
Balance brought forward from previous year	-4867
Balance carried forward to next year	20,249

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	251
Number of questionnaires returned	120
Percentage of questionnaires returned	48

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	69	28	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	65	34	1	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	61	37	3	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	42	49	9	0	0
The teaching is good.	79	21	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	56	35	9	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	76	19	5	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	84	16	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	50	44	5	1	0
The school is well led and managed.	83	13	2	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	68	30	2	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	31	45	17	0	7